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Security Council

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Letter dated 7 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 6 February 2018 from Nasr al-Hariri, general coordinator and head of the negotiation team of the Syrian Negotiation Commission, addressed to the United Nations (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) François **Delattre**

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Annex to the letter dated 7 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

On behalf of the Syrian Negotiation Commission, I urgently wish to bring it to your attention that the Syrian regime and Russian forces have launched a ruthless military escalation in Idlib governorate, in northern Syria, and across the country.

The past week has witnessed a major intensification of indiscriminate bombardment, which has included the use of chlorine gas on innocent civilians. Since 1 February, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, at least 42 civilians, including 18 children and four women, have been killed in Idlib. On Sunday, 4 February, the Assad regime and Russia launched at least 50 air strikes in Idlib governorate, killing at least 20 civilians and wounding 45 others in the areas of Ma'saran, Kafr Nubl, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Mardikh, Saraqib, Ghadafah and Khan al-Sabil. On 4 and 5 February, Russian warplanes repeatedly struck the Ma'arrat al-Nu'man Central Hospital and the Kafr Nubl Surgical Hospital in addition to a school in Hish village, all of which were put out of action. At least 11 civilians, including three Syria Civil Defence rescue workers, were caught up in a suspected chlorine barrel bomb attack carried out by the Syrian regime in the Sharqi neighbourhood of Saraqib.

The recent escalation in Idlib follows a pattern in which warplanes have intensively shelled civilians and civilian infrastructure across Syria, including in Hama and the besieged eastern Ghutah in the suburbs of Damascus, since the beginning of February. In violation of a ceasefire agreement negotiated by Russia in late January, over 24 civilians were killed by indiscriminate air strikes on the "de-escalation zone" on 5 February alone.

The regime's relentless military strategy once again threatens the prospects of a credible political solution for Syria. While we on the Syria Negotiation Commission continue to work towards progress in the United Nations-led political talks, the regime — aided by its Russian backers — insists on undermining and obstructing that process by wreaking death and devastation across Syria. If Security Council members truly wish to support a credible Syrian political process, they must spare no effort to put an end to the violence on the ground and decisively bring the regime to the negotiating table. That is the only way to stop the regime's brutality, which has marked Syria for far too long.

We therefore call on members of the Security Council to take the following actions:

- Enforce a nationwide ceasefire in Syria with impartial United Nations monitoring and credible enforcement in order to ensure that the war crimes and crimes against humanity come to an end;
- Bring pressure to bear on the Syrian regime and its backers to achieve progress in the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva;
- Hold war criminals accountable by creating the scope for criminal prosecution through the establishment by the General Assembly of a special tribunal for Syria.

We welcome your commitment to reviving the Geneva process and ensuring its primacy as the sole forum for a political solution in Syria. However, it is critical that your words translated into concrete action towards implementing Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué. It is also crucial that there are

consequences for any violation of the red lines that you have set, such as de-escalation, humanitarian access and constructive engagement in Geneva. The repeated abandonment of conditions and red lines has directly enabled the regime to stonewall and pursue a military solution. The Syrian people cannot afford more bloodshed, nor can they wait any longer for a sustainable political solution. We urgently owe them a breakthrough.

(*Signed*) Nasr **Al-Hariri**
Head, Syrian Negotiation Commission